United Nations E/ICEF/2004/10

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
31 March 2004*

Original: English

For action

United Nations Children's Fund
Executive Board
Annual session 2004
7-11 June 2004
Item 5 of the provisional agenda**

An assessment of UNICEF experience in joint programming and other innovative and collaborative approaches

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present report, prepared in response to Executive Board resolution 2003/10 of 5 June 2003, provides information on the experiences gained by UNICEF in joint programming, and other innovative and collaborative approaches to improve programming effectiveness and reduce transactions costs for programme countries.

* Submission of the present document was delayed by necessary internal consultations.
** E/ICEF/2004/8.

04-29440 (E) 160404

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I. Introduction: overview and concepts

1. In June 2003, the UNICEF Executive Board adopted decision 2003/10 requesting the Executive Director to submit to the Executive Board for consideration at its annual session in 2004 a written report containing an assessment, based on specific country examples, of the UNICEF experience in joint programming and other innovative and collaborative approaches aimed at improving programming effectiveness and reducing transaction costs, and their associated costs and benefits, for programme countries. The present report is a response to that decision and focuses on joint programming and other important programme collaboration experiences with United Nations agency partners and other international cooperation partners.

Programming

2. Programming, by its very nature, is a collaborative endeavour involving UNICEF country offices, their government partners, United Nations organizations, civil society, and other international partners. It should be based on a human rights-based approach and national ownership, which are essential to support nationally led efforts to realize the rights of children and women. The contents of the country programmes of cooperation and the modalities of execution are shaped by national development priorities, the situation of children and women, UNICEF organizational priorities, past experience and capacities in the programme countries.

3. There are three sequential phases in programming: advocacy and planning; support to national programme implementation; and monitoring and evaluation.

4. The planning phase starts with a joint United Nations country team and government assessment and analysis of the country situation, which is set out in the common country assessment (CCA). Based on the CCA, the United Nations agencies and the Government prepare the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which serves as a common framework with an agreed set of outcomes to which the United Nations agencies, government and other partners will contribute. The UNDAF provides the overall strategy for the United Nations agencies to follow in the preparation of their respective multi-year programmes of cooperation with the Government. For the four United Nations agencies in the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Executive Committee, including UNICEF, the UNDAF provides the strategy for the preparation of their Country Programme Documents (CPDs) and Country Programme Action Plans (CPAPs).

5. In the second phase, once the country programme of cooperation has been agreed upon, UNICEF country offices, together with government and other partners, prepare Annual Work Plans (AWPs) to support implementation of the Government's programmes. Once all programme partners agree to the proposed targets and results, activities, time frame, proposed allocation of resources and distribution of responsibilities, the AWPs are signed by the Government and the respective United Nations agencies. UNICEF provides the agreed-upon mix of inputs, which include cash assistance to the Government, technical assistance and supplies and equipment.

6. In the third phase, monitoring and evaluation activities are planned with the Government and normally involve the participation of all organizations with significant roles in the country programme. Evaluations assess the ongoing

relevance of the programme design and the choice of objectives and strategies in light of the first years of programme implementation and a possible changing country programme context. Major course corrections are normally decided following a Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the country programme.

Joint programming

7. Joint programming and other types of collaborative programming have been taking place for some time, notably in response to national initiatives related to achieving the goals set forth in international conferences summits and conventions.

8. The UNDAF has been one of the key joint programming instruments adopted by the UNDG. Central to the formulation of the UNDAF is the prioritization, by the Government and the United Nations country team, of a limited set of outcomes based on the analysis in the CCA. The selection of the outcomes, which are set out in the UNDAF results matrix, is governed by a consideration of the collective and comparative advantages of the United Nations system, as seen from the perspectives of the Government, the United Nations country team and other partners. The UNDAF serves as the basis not only for country programmes and projects but also for consideration of joint programmes.

9. Joint programming, according to the recently revised UNDG guidelines on the subject, "is the collective effort through which the United Nations organizations and national partners work together to prepare, implement, monitor and evaluate the activities aimed at effectively and efficiently achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other international commitments arising from United Nations conferences, summits, conventions and human rights instruments". It aims to maximize synergies among the national partners and the differing contributions of the United Nations system organizations — be they in terms of the normative framework and technical expertise or in terms of expertise in programme areas and strategies. Equally, joint programming aims to avoid duplication and reduce transaction costs.

Poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) and sector-wide approaches (SWAps)

10. In a number of country situations, two important macro-policy instruments exert important influences on the context of joint programming and other types of programme collaboration. One instrument, the PRSP, began as a tool for debt relief but is increasingly employed as a common instrument through which countries develop and express their nationally owned poverty-reduction strategies and policies. The Bretton Woods institutions use the PSRP to identify lending requirements and appropriate policy environments, while donors and other international organizations, including the United Nations agencies, use the instrument as a basis for aligning and coordinating their assistance strategies for poverty reduction at the national level and sometimes at the sub-national level.

11. Since 2001, the PRSP initiative has become the central country-led strategy for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The UNDG encourages all United Nations country teams to actively participate in the PRSP processes, where they

exist, as a platform to advocate for a more holistic human-rights approach to development, and to advocate for the Millennium Development Goals to serve as the long-term goals of national development and international cooperation. In the ideal situation, the CCA feeds into PRSP process, which, in turn, becomes the basis for formulation of the UNDAF. (Annex I provides a listing of 32 countries where there has been significant UNICEF engagement in PRSPs.)

12. The second key macro-policy instrument influencing joint programming and other programme collaboration is the SWAp. Led by Governments, SWAps articulate agendas for sector reforms, for example in health and education. UNICEF is participating in SWAps in 20 countries, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa.

13. Experiences with SWAps show differences across a range of countries. These differences include the quality of the sector plan in terms of coherence, specificity of objectives and results; clarity of operational detail; and comprehensiveness of arrangements for coordination, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. Capacity of line Ministries and other partners in planning, managing (including the financial aspects), implementing and monitoring the SWAp also varies. Experiences to date have been mixed: in some cases governments and donors are reassessing whether a SWAp is the most effective and efficient approach, while in other cases, governments and donors are using lessons learned from more positive experiences to strengthen SWAps.

14. The UNICEF experience with SWAps in Cambodia provides some useful lessons on how United Nations agencies may be able to support SWAps to achieve a high degree of efficiency and effectiveness within the context of the PRSP.

15. In Cambodia, UNICEF support for SWAps in education and health has proved critical in improving efficiency and securing widespread support for the sector plans. While the SWAp process has been very demanding of staff time for both UNICEF and Government, it has achieved clear and important gains. One major achievement is that both sectors have received increased funding as a result of the increased confidence in the SWAps shown by the Ministries, donors, the United Nations agencies non-governmental organizations. UNICEF contributed to the SWAp in an important way by supporting donor coordination.

16. Another achievement of the SWAps is the strengthening of the Cambodian Government's planning capacity at the national level. This was made evident by the completion, for the second year running, of the coordinated work plans by December. In addition, the quality of the sector plans has improved as a result of a strengthening of coordination both within and between Ministries. There is less overlap, and interventions are more focused. At provincial levels, annual work plans have been made with greater collaboration between provincial government and key partners, including UNICEF.

17. UNICEF and WHO were among the first partners to provide technical and financial support for the health sector plan, for which UNICEF provided significant inputs in terms of planning and review. UNICEF also participates four of six priority area working groups to support implementation of the health sector strategic plan. As a result of this input, financial resources are clearly indicated in the plan, and UNICEF financial support is fully integrated in annual operational plans at central and provincial levels.

II. The Millennium Development Goals and United Nations reform

The Millennium Development Goals and joint programming

18. The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals provide, for the first time, an agreed agenda and set of goals for development. Centred around the goal of reducing poverty by 2015, these springboards for action are supported by Member States of the United Nations, the United Nations system, including specialized agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions, various multilateral and bilateral donor organizations and others donors and international development agencies.

19. Under the leadership and ownership of Governments, the Millennium Development Goals represent a framework, a unique opportunity and a focus for improving joint programming among United Nations agencies and with other partners. This is particularly the case in countries where joint programming can make a significant contribution to improving programme effectiveness and lowering transaction costs. While the United Nations funds and programmes have complementary mandates, competencies and capacities, no single United Nations agency can provide all the expertise and resources required to assist programme countries in the sustainable achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. More effective collaboration and coordination in the United Nations system is required not only to increase the prospects of reaching the targets by 2015 but also to sustain the achievements.

United Nations reform and the Rome Declaration on unified approaches

20. The Secretary-General's reform agenda focuses on making the United Nations a more effective and efficient organization for world peace and development in the 21st century, and provides a coherent strategy for unifying approaches towards achieving common development goals at the country level. The two basic joint programming instruments of this reform, the CCA and UNDAF, are an integral part of efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. In addition to the Goals, the 2003 Rome Declaration on harmonization also reaffirmed the commitment to eradicating poverty and in addition highlighted the importance of harmonizing strategic planning and programming instruments, including joint programming. The changes introduced by the Secretary-General's reform agenda converge with harmonizing principles of the Rome Declaration, both of which commit development partners to achieve greater alignment with national priorities and processes in order to reduce transactions costs and to improve programme effectiveness.

21. The quality of the CCA and the UNDAF instruments are continually being improved to reflect developments such as the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals as well as experience gained and lessons learned by United Nations agencies, both at the headquarters and country levels. In the General Assembly's triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for the development of the United Nations system, good progress was noted in the fostering

of an improved sense of unity and common direction among the United Nations agencies at the country level. The review also noted that the analytical and strategic planning capacity of these organizations had been strengthened as a result of their engagement with the CCA and UNDAF processes.

22. Nevertheless, the review also underscored weaknesses found in the first generation of CCAs and UNDAFs. UNDAFs, according to the review, had notable shortcoming in terms of strategic focus and clearly defined frameworks for agreed-upon results. In addition, the development of the country programmes was not sufficiently linked to the UNDAF. To help counter these shortcomings, the introduction of the UNDAF results matrix is expected to improve the formulation and implementation of joint programming.

III. The rights-based approach and goals for children

23. The strong and unique contribution of UNICEF to joint programming stems from the organization's long-standing experience in working with partners in promoting children's rights and assisting Governments in the achievement of goals for children. UNICEF has engaged in various forms of cooperation with partners since its founding, and has made joint efforts a hallmark of its programming strategy. Its strong support of rights-based programming is informed by its promotion of children's rights, particularly in connection with the leading role UNICEF plays in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

24. In addition, the commitment UNICEF brings to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals reaches back to its determined support of the goals and principles of the 1990 World Summit for Children as well as other prior global conferences and conventions. This is particularly significant in light of the fact that many of the goals and principles of the World Summit for Children and key global conferences and conventions are reflected in the commitments of *A World Fit for Children* (2002) and the Millennium Declaration and Development Goals.

25. The strong role of UNICEF in joint programming is also a function of the organization's MTSP 2002-2005, as its five priorities — early childhood, immunization 'plus', girls' education, fighting HIV/AIDS and child protection — link directly with six out of the seven Millennium Development Goals. In addition, the involvement of UNICEF in joint programming is bolstered by its extensive field presence and the important role played by its regional offices, which are the front-line source of programming supporting to country offices.

26. The rich experience of UNICEF and its solid presence in the field enhance its participation in the three phases of joint programming — planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

Joint advocacy and joint programme strategy planning

27. UNICEF, drawing on its strong background in advocacy and communication in promoting child rights and goals for children, has been an active participant in joint efforts to advocate for adoption of the Millennium Development Goals as the focus for country programming, including processes involving CCA, UNDAF and PRSPs.

28. This background in promoting goals for children and child rights has worked well in the formulation of the CCA and UNDAF. UNICEF has helped to bring a rights-based approach to this process, for example in the selection of indicators, in the enhancement of the methodology for assessing trends and in the analysis of development and humanitarian problems and challenges. One of the chief aims of the CCA and UNDAF process is to increase national capacity to undertake and use the findings of situation analyses of children and women for joint and collaborative programming. UNICEF helps to ensure that this national capacity includes rights-based programming.

29. Overall, most United Nations country teams can complete a satisfactory assessment of national development trends; it is the teams' analyses of these trends and various contributing factors that show differing levels of quality. More work needs to be done in this area.

30. An example of where the CCA and UNDAF processes worked well was in Armenia, where the United Nations country team and its national partners were able to systematically analyse factors expediting or hampering progress in meeting national development priorities. The participants engaged in a spirited, analytical and highly professional dialogue on the national development challenges identified in the CCA, and this analysis contributed to the formulation of the UNDAF. The exercise did have substantial transaction costs in terms of the time and effort invested by national partners and the United Nations country team, but the investment proved worthwhile.

Support to joint programme implementation and management

31. UNICEF has made a good contribution to this phase of joint programming by drawing on decades of solid experience in supporting national programme implementation and management. The format and content of AWPs has been enriched by strong joint programming experiences of UNICEF and other partners in fields such as in immunization (for example, in India and all Latin American and Caribbean countries), universal salt iodization (in China, Sudan, and the countries of Central Asia) and child labour and other protection areas (in Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, India and South Africa).

32. The major challenge in joint programming is for national partners, United Nations agencies, and other partners to have the right mix of professional programming competencies — technical, managerial, programme communication, and others — in order to transform identified priorities into actionable programme and project initiatives through the AWPs. Examples of successful collaboration based on this mix include efforts to eradicate dracunculiasis in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Sudan, and the expansion of immunization and salt iodization in a number of Latin American and Caribbean countries. Analysing the competencies of partners and the comparative advantages each can bring to a common work plan will help the United Nations country team to improve results in a country's effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

33. United Nations country team thematic groups are another effective vehicle for improving joint programme implementation and management. In China, for example, a thematic group on HIV/AIDS has since 1999 successfully promoted joint efforts to end AIDS-related stigma and discrimination on a wide variety of fronts.

The initiative, known as "The Fighting AIDS-related Stigma and Discrimination Programme Accelerated Fund", benefits from previous efforts in this area made by other agencies, including UNICEF. The programme has improved the capacity of each of the UNAIDS co-sponsoring agencies to support national efforts by introducing a human rights-based approach to programming. This attention to rights has increased the amount of work done with vulnerable groups. It has also led to more substantive and coordinated policy dialogue and formulation. Consequently, joint programming implementation has been enhanced by the more focused leadership of national partners.

34. The participation of agencies in this effort is well distributed and based on the specific competencies of each. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), for example, concentrates on legal reform, promoting greater participation of people living with HIV/AIDS and forging links with national poverty-reduction initiatives. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) works with vulnerable groups. The International Labour Organization focuses on HIV/AIDS issues in the workplace, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime concentrates on eliminating stigmatization of injecting drug users. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is engaged through the national Education for All programme, and the World Health Organization (WHO) is developing the capacity of health care services to provide access for all without discrimination. The World Bank collaborates closely with all the United Nations agencies through an integrated work plan.

35. UNICEF contributes to the initiative through efforts made in several areas: prevention of parent-to-child transmission of HIV; mobilization of various groups for participation and behavioural change; and improving the care and protection of orphans and other children made vulnerable by AIDS. In April 2004, UNICEF, the Government of China and key partners, including Save the Children Alliance, convened the first national consultation on this issue. The consultation is expected to inform a national action plan to achieve the goal relating to orphans adopted at the Special Session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS.

36. In this multi-partner effort in China, programme priorities have governed the thrust of joint programming. Adjustments to mechanisms for administration and financial management are being made in accordance with the assessment of needs arising from joint programming experiences.

Joint programme monitoring and evaluation

37. An important challenge for United Nations agencies, Governments and other partners is to develop and manage integrated monitoring and evaluation of individual and collective programming contributions to Government-led programmes. While there were examples of joint monitoring and evaluations prior to harmonization, the five initial countries to introduce harmonized processes for joint programming are playing a pioneering role in creating good practices in this area.

IV. The five CCA/UNDAF pilot country experiences

38. The United Nations harmonized country programme preparation process began with five countries whose new programme cycles began in 2004. The countries, Benin, Ecuador, Kenya, Niger and Pakistan, were the first to use some of the harmonized tools, including the revised CCA/UNDAF guidelines — which included the UNDAF results matrix — and the CPDs, the CPAPs and AWPs.

39. These countries are now in their implementation phase and have used the preparation process to identify areas for continued joint programming and other areas of collaboration.

Benin

40. The United Nations country team's investment in the CCA resulted in a common situation analysis of high quality. This analysis helped the country team to develop the UNDAF results matrix, which defined three national goals: reduction of poverty and malnutrition; reduction of infant and maternal mortality, with improvements in relevant multisectoral indicators; and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. Four UNDAF outcomes were identified to help to achieve these goals: improved governance to strengthen economic development; sustainable food and nutrition security; improved utilization of social services by women, girls, youth and other vulnerable groups; and enhanced national capacities to combat HIV/AIDS and malaria.

41. Based on the UNDAF results matrix, a joint programme is being put together to support the development of *BenInfo*. A national integrated socio-economic database using *ChildInfo* technology, *BenInfo* allows the Government and national partners to monitor progress on national goals, Millennium Development Goals and other commitments. The UNDAF is also helping to stimulate policy and programme linkages between the Benin-UNICEF country programme of cooperation, the Government's overall programme of action and the PRSP in an effort to widen access to basic social services.

42. United Nations agencies are working jointly in a number of areas. In education, they are working towards increasing girls' participation, improving quality and developing human potential. UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) are collaborating on providing school canteens and keeping girls in school. UNFPA is a partner in adolescent and youth capacity-building to prevent HIV/AIDS. In the health sector, collaboration focuses on strengthening capacities for the development of the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness strategy. This includes prevention and prompt and adequate treatment of malaria, improved access for girls and women to emergency obstetric and neonatal care services, improvement of immunization coverage and support to the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Programme collaboration in child protection involves WFP, the European Union, Denmark and UNICEF in efforts to combat child trafficking.

43. In the PRSP process, UNICEF has advocated the implementation of the 20/20 initiative, stressing that poverty reduction should start with children. In 2002, UNICEF funded a disparity analysis to disaggregate the results of the 1996 and 2001 Demographic Health Surveys according to wealth quintiles. This high-quality contribution, noted by all partners involved in the PRSP process, allowed for better

targeted pro-poor policies. UNICEF was also the main supporter of the *BenInfo* initiative.

44. Since early 2003, UNICEF has played a key role in preparing the SWAP for the education sector. The SWAP instrument is well coordinated and jointly supported by a group of key donors: the World Bank, UNICEF, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the French Cooperation. The group meets every other month to discuss education programmes and projects and to adopt common policy approaches.

Ecuador

45. In Ecuador, the UNDAF is strategic in that it reflects a common approach rather than a compilation of agency mandates. In addition, the UNDAF results matrix shows overall linkages between national goals, UNDAF outcomes and the planned results of the Ecuador-UNICEF country programme of cooperation. A number of United Nations agencies, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, WHO and UNICEF, as well as other partners, have shared country programme outcomes such as salt iodization, vitamin A supplementation, and strengthened local service delivery.

46. The Ecuador-UNICEF country programme addresses two out of the three UNDAF outcomes: poverty reduction and governance. UNICEF assists the Government in the implementation of its national programme by assisting with monitoring the efficiency of social expenditures aimed at reducing poverty.

47. There are several examples of joint programming: UNDP and UNICEF, for instance, jointly support and fund the technical secretariat of the Fiscal Observatory (*Observatorio de la Política Fiscal*), an Ecuadorian citizen's initiative led by a Citizens Council. The two organizations participate in the technical committee of the Observatory, which carries out preliminary analysis and publishes bulletins, and they fund its meetings.

48. Another example of joint programming is the United Nations country team's work on a monitoring and evaluation framework for the UNDAF, which will provide a basis for monitoring progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, there are two functioning theme groups: one on HIV/AIDS, which UNICEF chairs, and another on emergencies. UNICEF also works directly with WHO/Pan American Health Organization on health issues, and with the United Nations Development Fund for Women and UNFPA on gender issues. Other programme collaboration opportunities include the country coordinating committee mechanism for the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the inter-agency coordination committee on immunization.

Kenya

49. The four Executive Committee agencies are working closely in areas where common results have been identified, based on the UNDAF results matrix. These include livelihoods of refugee communities; widening access to education for girls and other disadvantaged groups of children; strengthening Government internal management; strengthening efforts in HIV/AIDS, including care and protection for

orphans; promoting popular participation; and safe water and sanitation, as part of the programme with the World Bank on primary education for children living in arid and semi-arid areas (for which UNCEF provides school supplies and support for water, sanitation and hygiene promotion). In addition, the UNDAF process has stimulated closer sectoral collaboration with other United Nations agencies for emergency preparedness, including response to drought.

50. Joint efforts also involve capacity-building for monitoring progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This capacity-building includes a joint programme related to the introduction of the *DevInfo* software, and builds on current UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA joint efforts with the Central Bureau of Statistics. *DevInfo* will be used to track indicators relating to the Millennium Development Goals in the Government's new economic recovery programme. The CCA and UNDAF exercise in Kenya is also contributing to more effective approaches to monitoring and evaluation.

51. UNICEF contributed to the PRSP process by supporting a workshop to finalize the national development plan for 2002-2008, which incorporated PRSP priorities, and UNICEF participated in activities to formulate the implementation action plan. In 2003, the Government used the PRSP to develop the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation (ERSWC) 2003-2007 and its accompanying investment plan. Government, donors and United Nations agencies agreed early in 2004 that the core work for the ERSWC is the sector-wide plans, notably in the health, education, and governance and justice sectors. UNICEF is participating fully in the budgeted sector plans at the provincial and district levels, thus making the ERSWC more substantive and operational. UNICEF, with its capacity at sub-national levels, is the main United Nations organization assisting the provincial government in the poorest north-eastern area with its health and education sector plans.

52. UNICEF is working closely with the World Bank and other bilateral aid organizations on SWAps in education, health, and governance and justice that are being prepared in 2004. While its financial contribution to the SWAps will be relatively modest compared with contributions from other partners, UNICEF will advocate approaches to effectively improve services for Kenyans living in poverty. Within the SWAps, UNICEF will support quality evaluations that focus on impact, coverage and costs of innovation in reaching the most vulnerable segments of the population.

Niger

53. The Niger UNDAF addresses three national goals and identifies 13 outcomes in support of those goals. The national goal of achieving universal access to basic services, for example, is supported by five UNDAF outcomes: improving sanitation and nutritional status of children; improving access to reproductive health services; increasing access to sanitation services; reduction in prevalence of HIV/AIDS; and improving access to quality education for children, especially girls.

54. In the context of the UNDAF and PRSP, UNICEF and other United Nations agencies and partners are exploring collaboration on activities that include promoting legislation to improve gender equality and strengthening food security (with WFP); adolescent development (with UNFPA); family capacity to handle risks

(with the World Bank), and improving social and economic development planning in districts (with UNDP).

55. In Niger, The PRSP preceded the UNDAF and sharpened its strategic focus. The PRSP serves as a common strategy for all United Nations agencies and as a key reference for the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, both of which are actively involved in the UNDAF exercise.

56. UNICEF was very involved in the development of the PRSP and supported the multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS) that informed the key indicators developed in the PRSP. Moreover, the PRSP section on the development of social policies was drafted with UNICEF input, specifically on issues of the dimensions of poverty related to children and women; food security; education strategies; and the strategic health plan (including the HIV/AIDS mid-term strategic plan). In addition, UNICEF financed and facilitated training for government partners to support the PRSP. UNICEF is also contributing to 7 of the 11 PRSP theme groups covering issues that include the monitoring of poverty; education; health; rural development and food security; HIV/AIDS and vulnerable groups; socially excluded people; and infrastructures, mines and energy.

Pakistan

57. The United Nations country team is playing a significant role in the dialogue taking place with the Government and donors on key social development issues and on addressing improved monitoring on these issues, for example in health and education.

58. The UNDAF addresses 12 national priorities and contains 39 outcomes to contribute to the achievement of those priorities. The United Nations country team is finalizing two joint programmes at the national level: one on HIV/AIDS, and the other on monitoring UNDAF outcomes. In addition, the country team agreed on 15 districts where two or more agencies will join in a common programme during the course of the year.

59. For the national education goals of achieving universal primary education for boys and girls by 2015 and reducing gender disparity by 10 per cent per year, the UNDAF results matrix identifies several contributing UNDAF outcomes: improved rates of primary school enrolment, retention and completion, especially for girls; sustained political commitment and increased budget allocations for primary education; effective implementation of strategies to meet Education for All targets; improved learning outcomes for children; and higher quality of teacher training.

60. In the context of PRSP linkages with the UNDAF, WFP and UNICEF have agreed to work jointly towards increasing girls' enrolment and retention in primary schools. The WFP will provide food to schools and communities to encourage girls' participation, while UNICEF will address issues related to the recruitment, appointment and training of female teachers as well as to promoting a girl-friendly school environment and improving the quality of teaching and learning processes. Furthermore, the United Nations theme group on education has been very useful in coordinating donor efforts and has helped generate a common understanding about which policies and actions are needed in the education sector.

61. UNICEF provided leadership for most of the PRSP analysis and dialogue, underscoring the importance of linking financial resources to social outcomes, including children's rights and issues such as gender disparity. It is expected that the PRSP, a work in progress, will be updated soon with child protection indicators. In addition, UNICEF supported four provinces in developing provincial PRSPs and in conducting MICS to provide baseline data for the monitoring of PRSP outcomes at district level. Consultations were held in 24 districts, almost a quarter of all districts. Since provinces in Pakistan are responsible for delivery of social services, this work is a key input into the formulation of the PRSP at sub-national levels. This effort should also improve the effectiveness of programmes addressing poverty reduction and improving basic social services at the community level.

62. UNICEF is a member of the technical group formed by the Resident Coordinator to help formulate the Millennium Development Goals report for Pakistan. UNICEF contributed to the design of the review of the Goals, and was the main source of data through the *ChildInfo* database.

V. Experiences gained and lessons learned in programming and operations

The five pilot countries

63. The experiences of the five pilot countries demonstrate that the success of joint programming depends very much on the degree to which it facilitates programme results in support of national efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Supporting this effort should be workable inter-agency arrangements for finance and administration regarding joint planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. First and foremost though, this support structure should be simplified and harmonized to meet programming requirements. Therefore, the greatest single challenge for the United Nations agencies is to upgrade their expertise in programming and their substantive knowledge of the Millennium Development Goals so that the CCA and UNDAF fulfil their purposes and serve the needs of programme countries. Meeting this challenge will make programmes more effective and reduce transaction costs.

64. To contribute to programme effectiveness and donor coordination, it is important for United Nations agencies to become involved in all instruments for identifying and implementing national priorities, including PRSPs and SWAps. In addition to being very engaged in the harmonized programme planning process, for example, UNICEF country teams have energetically participated in PRSPs in four of the five countries where PRSPS have been developed, and in the SWAps being developed and implemented in Benin, Kenya and Pakistan.

65. Full participation in the harmonized country preparation process can demand an unexpectedly high input of time and resources. As UNICEF devotes an increasing amount of staff time and efforts to these processes, the potential effect on support to programme implementation will need to be monitored and managed.

66. An increasingly systematic use of the UNDAF results matrix in the five countries is proving to be useful. However, the UNDG will need to make significant

investments to support and train United Nations country teams so that they can use this tool even more effectively as more countries begin the harmonized process.

The PRSP and SWAps

67. As was seen in Cambodia, SWAps are increasingly useful in reducing poverty by coordinating resources, including those from donors, and by improving work planning, budgeting and collaboration among all partners, including Governments at all levels.

68. An assessment made by partners in the SWAps in Cambodia, however, showed that the sector programmes had not reduced transaction costs because many partners have continued to conduct bilateral programme and project reviews instead of relying on sector reviews and evaluations. In this regard, UNICEF has set an example in the education sector by accepting the sector review as sufficient for its MTR instead of demanding separate bilateral reporting. In the future, more attention needs to be given to reducing the number of bilateral reviews undertaken by United Nations agencies and other participants in SWAps.

Results-based joint programming

69. The UNDAF provides a common country strategy for identifying outcomes related to the Millennium Development Goals, which are the basis for the United Nations system's support to national programmes. Joint programming helps the United Nations country team to better support national priorities and achieve planned outcomes. The challenge will be to provide additional support to United Nations country teams as they seek to apply these harmonized concepts and programming methodology to achieve results. The regional inter-agency entities of the four Executive Committee Agencies are expected to provide support and oversight.

UNICEF operational and administrative arrangements

70. Joint programming requires that UNICEF is able to fulfil a number of key roles, such as administrative agency, management agent and/or funding partner. An initial assessment of the adequacy of the UNICEF business processes and the management information systems to support these roles, both at field and headquarters levels, is positive. This means that several funding options can be used within the framework of joint programming, as described in the UNDG guidance note. The specific modality adopted — parallel, pass-through or pooled — should be determined by sound programmatic considerations.

71. In using these funding options, however, UNICEF should uniformly interpret the principles outlined in the UNDG guidance note on joint programming while adhering to its own established procedures in order to meet internal and external reporting requirements.

72. The parallel funding mechanism mirrors that of UNICEF for resource transfers to national partners. Therefore, UNICEF does not need to make changes unless new

resource transfer modality procedures are adopted by the Executive Committee agencies of the UNDG.

73. The pass-through funding mechanism is similar to existing management arrangements for UNICEF trust funds in cases where UNICEF serves as an administrative agency. Funds received by UNICEF under this mechanism for programme implementation would be accounted for and managed using the established processes for other resources.

74. The funding mechanism for pooled funds, with UNICEF as a managing agent, would be most effective and efficient when the participating United Nations agencies and the national partners were pursuing common results with common national or sub-national partners. This would be the case, for example, with support for pre-service and in-service teacher training and post-training teacher support activities with the Ministry of Education.

75. Country offices will remain responsible for preparing narrative reports on joint programmes and for consolidating reports from other agencies when the offices serve as management or administrative agents. The Division of Financial Management continue to be responsible for preparing final certified financial reports.

VI. Future opportunities and challenges

Improved guidance

76. Several studies and sets of guidelines have been produced recently to sharpen the strategic focus of joint programming and development cooperation. In 2003, the UNDG Programme Group adopted an important inter-agency guideline, "The Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation: Towards a Common Understanding among United Nations Agencies", to which UNICEF had made a major contribution.

77. Also in 2003, with support from the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, two pilot evaluations were undertaken of country programmes and the progress being made in developing a standard methodology for country programme evaluation emphasizing the human rights-based approach.

78. A major emphasis during 2004 and 2005 will be placed on helping the United Nations country teams and national and other partners to apply this and other guidance being prepared. The inter-agency regional entities of the Executive Committee agencies will play a paramount role in this effort.

79. Many lessons will emerge as the process evolves. By 2004, the simplification and harmonization of policy, procedures and processes for United Nations funds and programmes is expected to be completed. The UNDG, in collaboration with the five pilot countries, has designed and field-tested the first cohort of improved simplified and harmonized tools and processes for widespread application to countries undertaking new programme implementation. By 2008, the UNDG Executive Committee agencies will have fully introduced harmonized preparation processes for all new cycles of country programmes.

80. It may be too early to draw firm lessons learned on how much joint programming will reduce transaction costs and increase programme effectiveness for programme countries, as the first five countries are in the implementation phase. Nevertheless, a few trends are worth monitoring in the next few years:

(a) First, the CCA is providing an opportunity for agencies to simplify the requirements for programme planning. UNICEF, for one, has stopped requiring country programmes to undertake a separate situation analysis of children and women if they have a CCA, as the CCA should largely serve this purpose.

(b) Second, the UNDAF is increasingly serving as a common country strategy, including for UNICEF country programmes of cooperation with Governments. The strategy holds high potential for reducing costs and increasing effectiveness. This is why it is vital that the UNDAF and its results matrix be of high quality.

(c) Third, the participation of UNICEF in PRSPs and SWAps is increasing but involves a substantial amount of staff time. Although this participation is contributing positively to government policy, planning, and sector programmes, it will require an increased amount of human resources in order to avoid possible constraints in ongoing UNICEF support to programme implementation.

Operational and administrative challenges

81. As roll-out of harmonized country programme preparation processes continues, oversight of these processes will require more attention and resources.

82. The outcome of the UNDG work on resource transfer modalities and procedures, in which UNICEF is participating fully, will have an impact on the way funds are transferred to national partners. Once the UNDG adopts new guidance in this area, UNICEF will identify the implications for its own processes, review its business flows and provide direction for country offices in implementing any new procedures and policies.

83. Recognizing the need for the administrative agent or management agency to consolidate the agencies' varied reporting requirements in the harmonized process, the Executive Committee agencies are introducing standard donor agreements and reporting formats. UNICEF is considering the implications for its collaboration with National Committees for UNICEF, with foundations and with other non-governmental sources of funding.

84. There are a number of financial reporting issues that will be addressed and resolved in the next few years. For example, there should be "standard contents" for reporting on joint programmes in order to assure quality and control transaction costs among for the United Nations agencies and their national partners. In addition, the level of detail of financial reporting will need to be standardized.

VII. Change management

85. The experience of UNICEF in joint programming is providing useful lessons and opportunities for the continued development of its human resources strategy,

which is evolving to reflect harmonization and strong linkages to the United Nations change management process. Several initiatives are planned.

86. UNICEF recognizes the continued need to improve programme and management guidance in order to build critical capacity for implementation of the MTSP and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the joint programming environment. UNICEF will promote staff development, training, orientation, and team-building skills at country, regional and headquarters levels, focusing on humanitarian crises as well as development situations. A key to success in this area is the enhancement of the role and capacity of regional offices and regional management teams as the primary providers of support and oversight for country offices.

87. Continual collaboration with other United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies will take place to improve common staff assessment tools (e.g., competency assessments and performance appraisal systems) and the gathering of feedback from staff at country and regional levels as part of quality assurance and management for MTSP results.

88. UNICEF is participating in the Secretary-General's initiative to develop a common Senior Management Service, which will interchange senior mangers in the system so that they can enrich their competencies and experiences and meet new challenges as part of career development.

89. Another aim is to improve the design and use of various forms of inter-agency exchange and enrichment programmes already under way. These include other exchanges of staff among the UN agencies.

90. Close communication among staff members is vital to this effort. At UNICEF, there is a scheduled and timely dialogue with country, regional and headquarters staff regarding updating of job descriptions and annual staff work and training plans to better reflect inter-agency related tasks at all levels. In addition, UNDG guidelines on joint programming have been issued to all relevant UNICEF staff, and UNICEF is currently developing materials to assist staff in implementing the guidelines.

VIII. Draft recommendation

91. The Executive Director recommends that the Executive Board adopt the following draft recommendation:

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the report on the assessment of the UNICEF experience of joint programming contained in document E/ICEF/2004/10;

2. *Welcomes* the efforts made to date by UNICEF to strengthen joint programming and other innovative and collaborative approaches aimed at improving programming effectiveness and reducing transaction costs for programme countries, and encourages the Executive Director to continue to work with Governments and other partners towards that end;

3. *Requests* the Executive Director to continue to cooperate with United Nations agencies and other partners at the international and national levels in

strengthening joint programming and other innovative and collaborative approaches to support national priorities in the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.

Annex 1

Examples of UNICEF engagement with PRSP processes

1. *Albania*: UNICEF published Ministry of Finance surveys involving MICS, assessment of social and economic conditions in districts for the PRSP and managed information.

2. *Azerbaijan*: Participated in poverty assessment and household budget survey to monitor the socio-demographic indicators of poverty. Organized a conference on the Impact of Poverty on the Status of Children and Women with the Ministry of Economic Development and PRSP Secretariat.

3 *Benin*: Concentrated on disparity reduction. Participated in technical working groups.

4. *Burkina Faso*: Participated in sectoral groups for education and health.

5. *Cambodia*: Chaired a session on social sectors at the national workshop on the national poverty-reduction strategy and provided substantial support to Ministries.

6. *Chad*: Helped to increase allocation to health, education and social action by 20 per cent in 2003.

7. *Congo*: Integrated issues of the rights of children and women.

8. *Côte d'Ivoire*: Participated in thematic discussions (health, education, HIV/AIDS).

9. *Djibouti*: Completed a situation analysis with two studies.

10. *Democratic Republic of the Congo*: Organized a workshop for PRSP consultants with civil society organizations, and developed strategies for social sectors.

11. *Dominican Republic*: Provided assistance to the President.

12. *Georgia*: Elaborated priority areas for health, and seconded professional to lead the PRSP education task group.

13. *Ghana*: A sub-group on vulnerability and exclusion was led by an expert. The UNICEF Representative was a member of the reference group.

14. *Guinea*: Advocated for a human rights-based approach and informed decision-makers about the PRSP on children and women, improving access to basic social services, reducing gender gaps to achieve universal education , and reducing material mortality.

15. *Guinea Bissau*: Provided training on data analysis techniques to Government staff.

16. *Guyana*: Included early child development in the PRSP.

17. *Honduras*: Participated in sectoral meetings in health, education and decentralization issues.

18. *Lesotho*: With Save the Children, UK, and Save the Children, Lesotho, established a children and youth thematic group.

19. *Madagascar*: Provided input in education.

20. *Malawi*: Joined theme groups on education, health, nutrition, poverty and governance.

21. *Mali*: Joined the preparatory process SWAps in health, education and law.

22. *Mauritania*: Participated in thematic groups.

23. *Mozambique*: With UNDP provided input on monitoring and evaluation.

24. *Nicaragua*: Advocated to include regional- and income-group disparities.

25. *Niger*: Participated in seven thematic groups.

26. *Pakistan*: Led analysis of social sectors in the PRSPs, and linked budgeting with social outcomes.

27. *Rwanda*: With WHO, provided inputs in health and education.

28. *Sao Tome and Principe*: Provided inputs on MICS data, validation of indicators, and methodology for gender analysis and evaluation.

29. *Senegal*: Participated in thematic groups.

30. *Serbia and Montenegro*: With other United Nations agencies, advocated that analysis of poverty need include more than income or consumption data. Staff member working on education sector.

31. *Sierra Leone*: Joined technical committees and helped prepare terms of reference for sector reviews.

32. *Sri Lanka*: Reviewed the drafts and provided technical support for monitoring the PRSPs.

33. *United Republic of Tanzania*: Seconded senior officer and highlighted issues on HIV/AIDS, the child mortality rate, malnutrition, vulnerability.

34. *Zambia*: Facilitated the participation of NGOs and civil society organizations. Provided technical inputs in health, education and HIV/AIDS.